

**RECORDS MANAGEMENT STAFF PAPER NUMBER 5**

# **RECORDS RETENTION PLAN**

**WHY . . . . .**

**WHAT . . . . .**

**HOW . . . . .**

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## THE RECORDS RETENTION PLAN

WHY -----

WHAT -----

HOW -----

WHY -----

- Required by law (Federal Records Act of 1950)
- Assures
  - Documentation of an Agency's stewardship of its public trust and responsibilities
  - Accounting owed by public officials to the people
  - Consistency and continuity of governmental actions
- Provides information as to the structure, missions, and functions of an organization
- Provides historical research information
- Basic to comprehensive record disposition program development

EXCERPTS

CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS

TITLE 41  
Chapter 101

#101--11.403--2: RECORDS RETENTION AND DISPOSAL STANDARDS

The following standards govern the retention and disposal of agency records:

(a) Records Control Schedules. These disposition schedules, developed by each Federal agency for all records in its custody as provided by #101--11.401, designate classes of records of continuing value identified in the **RECORDS RETENTION PLANS**. The schedules also specify retention periods for records not of continuing value. Formulation and application of these schedules, to provide for the orderly retirement and reduction of records in each agency, is mandatory as provided by #101--11.401--3.

(b) General Records Schedules. The schedules, issued by the Administrator, govern the retention and disposal of certain types of records common to all agencies. The schedules are permissive as provided by #101--11.404.

(c) **RECORDS RETENTION PLANS**. A separate plan for each agency or subdivision thereof governs the selective retention of records of continuing value. The plans . . . are integral parts of agency programs for records retention and disposal as provided for by #101--11.403--3.

#101--11.403--3: PERMANENTLY VALUABLE RECORDS RETENTION PROGRAM.

In an agency program to select permanently valuable records, the following four basic elements are present:

(a) The taking of a complete inventory of records in the custody of the agency as provided by #101--11.401.

WHAT -----

- Records containing evidence as to the organization and functioning of the governmental body that produced the records
  - Formal policy and procedural issuances with related documentation concerning their origin and development
  - Organization charts, functional statements, and directories
  - Narrative and statistical reports on program accomplishment at the divisional and higher organizational levels
  - Publicity and informational material
  - Records on executive direction: laws, executive orders; court decisions; legal opinions; legislative history; agenda, minutes, transcripts, and supporting papers of meetings; studies, surveys, audits, and inspections; documents reflecting relations with the White House, the Executive Office of the President, and the Congress on substantive matters; and budgetary documentation
  - Records showing program accomplishment
  - Records containing information about persons, corporate bodies, things, problems, conditions, programs, projects, and the like with which the organization dealt
  - Publications
- Research information
  - Papers containing direct reference to trends or developments in political, social, economic or other fields, particularly if they contain, unpublished statistical or financial data covering a long period or wide area
  - Papers relating to the more important aspects of scientific or technical research and development

(b) The development . . . of a RECORDS RETENTION PLAN designating the permanently valuable classes of records arising from agency functions.

(c) The identification by the agency of the specific records or segments of files allocated to the classes specified for retention by the plan . . .

(d) The orderly maintenance and segregation by the agency of the records identified under paragraph (c) of this section.

HOW -----

- Analyze functions and activities of the organization
- Identify various types and classes of records accumulating in connection with each function
- Determine to what extent each function should be documented
- Identify the types and classes of records that should be preserved for administrative history and general research
- Prepare the formal records retention plan which governs the selective retention of records of continuing value and which, with records control schedules, provides for the orderly disposal of an organization's records